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New York

President:	Mr. Mahbubani	(Singapore)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Franco
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mali	Mr. Konfourou
	Mauritius	Mr. Gayan
	Norway	Mr. Strommen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Sergeev
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	Ukraine	Mr. Krokhmal
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Harrison
	United States of America	Mr. Minton

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (S/2001/35).

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01-22307 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Mauritius

The President: At the outset of the meeting, I should like to acknowledge the presence at the Council table of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Mauritius, The Honourable Anil Kumarsingh Gayan. On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to him.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (S/2001/35)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Central African Republic, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome the Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic, Mr. Agba Otikpo Mezode.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mezode (Central African Republic) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Sy to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend invitations under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Frederick Lyons, Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and to Mr. Mats Karlsson, Vice-President for External Affairs and United Nations Affairs of the World Bank.

Before I announce a decision on this, let me mention that I had informed the members of the Council at the consultations of the whole yesterday that UNDP would be represented by Mr. Diabre. When I returned to my office yesterday evening I got a new message saying that, instead, Mr. Frederick Lyons would represent UNDP. I thought I should explain this to members of the Council.

There being no objection to the participation of these two individuals, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Lyons and Mr. Karlsson to take the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

I would like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 22 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request you to extend an invitation to Mr. Ridha Bouabid, Permanent Observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie to the United Nations, in connection with the Security Council debate on the situation in the Central African Republic, scheduled for 23 January 2001, in accordance with rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council."

That letter will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2001/67.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under

rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Bouabid.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Bouabid to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic, document S/2001/35.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic. I give him the floor.

Mr. Sy (*spoke in French*): I have the honour today to introduce to the Security Council the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic, contained in document S/2001/35. This is the second report of the Secretary-General since the establishment of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), on 15 February 2000, and covers the period from July 2000 to January 2001. The report describes the overall situation in the Central African Republic and gives an account of what the Office has been doing to support the authorities and all segments of Central African society in their efforts for national reconciliation and peace-building.

As members of the Council will see from the report before them, the political situation in the Central African Republic is characterized by considerable tension in relations between the ruling party and the opposition. There is little communication or dialogue between the political players. President Patassé has not yet organized the meeting with the country's political players that he promised in June 2000. The opposition, which seems to favour confrontation, is today calling for the President's resignation.

The tense relations between the ruling party and the opposition worsened in December 2000 with the arrest and trials of over 60 persons — including four opposition parliamentarians — in connection with their participation in an unauthorized meeting. Although all those arrested were released after the trial held on 29 December 2000 and 3 January 2001, the tension is far from dissipated. Opposition deputies have been boycotting the work of the National Assembly since then. The developments in the political situation and, in particular, the lack of consultation or dialogue among political players, are obstacles to strengthening the young democratic institutions of the Central African Republic.

The second report on the situation in the Central African Republic stresses the serious nature of social problems in that country today. The social situation is still very tense and has worsened since October as a result of the prolonged civil service strike precipitated by the accumulation of unpaid salary arrears and current salaries. Civil servants are calling for the payment of 12 months' worth of arrears out of the 30 months' worth of salaries due them. The opposition is siding with the unions and is attempting to exploit the social situation politically.

I must draw the attention of members of the Council to the fact that the operation referred to as "Central Africa: a dead country", which had been called for by trade unions, has been a complete failure, as the orders of the unions headquarters were not heeded. This development could lead to the opposition showing a degree of flexibility that might make possible the establishment of a genuine dialogue with a view to a definitive settlement of the social crisis.

The economic situation is very precarious. The Central African economy has not yet recovered from the destruction that took place in connection with the mutinies. The overall crisis in the country has worsened as a result of the problems in fuel supplies that began in June 2000. The situation has also worsened as a result of the war in neighbouring Congo, the consequent disruptions in shipping on the Ubangui River and the resulting disruption in the supply of basic goods to the country.

There has been a drop in tax and customs revenues, which has made it impossible for the authorities to improve public finances or to deal with the country's financial obligations. However, one can hope that the recent financial support measures taken by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will enable the Government to deal

gradually with the problems facing it, including the problem of salaries.

With regard to the human rights situation, we have been happy to see a decrease in the number of summary and extrajudicial executions. However, another form of human rights violations has emerged in the Central African Republic: the popular justice referred to as "neighbourhood justice", which is common in Bangui and in which victims — thieves and "witches" — are often beaten to death.

The situation in the jails is also a cause for concern. Conditions for prisoners in police stations and gendarmerie brigades are not in keeping with international standards. The United Nations Office has organized many training courses in cooperation with the Government to strengthen capacity in this area. About 300 law enforcement officers have been given training in human rights and international humanitarian law. There is an urgent need to strengthen the country's judicial and prison systems, but that can be done only with substantial assistance from donors.

With regard to security and military questions, the report indicates that the overall situation in Bangui and the interior of the country is calm. However, there have been acts of urban banditry and major roads have been blocked for the purpose of highway robbery in the provinces. The programme to restructure defence and security forces continues, and several positive steps have been taken. However, there have been no tangible results in the demobilization and reintegration programme due to a lack of adequate resources. The programme was restructured, but it has been suspended for technical reasons. It will resume as soon as the necessary resources are available.

The report before the Council stresses the impact of the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Central African Republic. That war has led in particular to an influx of refugees into the southern part of the country, thereby contributing to the worsening of the economic situation. Needless to say, the recent death of President Kabila only serves to add to the uncertainty looming over the subregion, which in turn makes peace in such a vulnerable country as the Central African Republic even more fragile.

I would now like to draw the attention of members of the Council to the observations contained at the end of the report.

The situation in the Central African Republic today is of great concern. Political and social tension and the negative impact of the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo mean that the Central African Republic is the soft underbelly of the subregion, a fact that seriously jeopardizes any chance of strengthening peace and stability. The Secretary-General urges political actors in the Central African Republic, including the Government, to muster the necessary political will to overcome the current crisis.

Because of the economic and financial difficulties facing it, the Government of the Central African Republic has enormous expectations of the international community in general and of the United Nations in particular. Unfortunately, pledges made at the special donors' meeting in New York in May 2000 were not followed up on immediately. It would be very desirable for the partners of the Central African Republic to honour all their commitments. In this regard, I should like, on behalf of the Secretary-General, to thank all those Member States that have lived up to the promises that they made at the May 2000 meeting.

Finally, the Secretary-General draws the attention of the Council to the fact that the investment made by the international community to restore peace in the Central African Republic is in danger of being completely wasted if emergency assistance is not provided to the Central African authorities. In this regard, I should like to stress the range and gravity of the challenges facing the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic. Such challenges are both political and institutional, and require sustained attention on the part of the international community.

The President: I thank Mr. Sy for his comprehensive briefing.

The next speaker is the Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Frederick Lyons, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lyons: The Representative of the Secretary-General has outlined the severe social, economic and financial difficulties brought about by prolonged political tension, the army mutinies in 1996 and 1997

and repeated crises of governance in the Central African Republic. The fundamental problems of human insecurity that have resulted from this have led the Central African Republic's Government, with the support of the United Nations missions in Bangui, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other partners of the Central African Republic, to engage in a disarmament programme.

Building on the Bangui Agreement of 1996 and the recommendations of the 1998 National Reconciliation Conference, and within the framework of its National Plan to Fight Poverty, the Government and UNDP agreed in April 1998 on a demobilization and reintegration programme, with initial UNDP financing of approximately $2 million.

The new $7 million National Programme for Demobilization and Reintegration (PNDR), which was adopted at last year's Special Meeting on Security and Development, is a continuation and consolidation of this earlier programme, to which UNDP is now allocating additional resources. Working together with other development partners that pledged resources last May, namely, the European Union and the Governments of France, Italy, Norway and Germany, and with Canada, which made a pledge recently, the United Nations system hopes to have a positive and direct impact on the livelihood and security of the population of the Central African Republic.

I am pleased to report that the PNDR has now established the technical conditions for the implementation of the demobilization and reintegration programme. These include the installation of a central operational office; the conduct of a series of preliminary studies; the drawing up of an administrative and financial record of all military personnel and gendarmes; the establishment of a computerized data bank; the formulation of legal instruments for demobilization; the implementation of the first phase of an information campaign; the completion of a study on the socio-economic profile of military personnel and gendarmes; and the organization of a workshop on strategies for the financing of micro-projects.

In an initial phase, approximately 700 military and gendarmes will be demobilized. There will be approximately 5,000 beneficiaries, when families and dependants are included. To ensure the effective start-up of the programme, the Government of the Central African Republic will need to meet the prior obligation of settling outstanding civil service wages, including those of the 700 military and others who are to be demobilized under the programme. Timely contributions of the donor community to the PNDR will also be critical.

More generally, the PNDR needs to be seen as one of a number of programme initiatives aimed at enhancing human security and governance in the Central African Republic. In this connection, for the period 2000-2003, UNDP has allocated $9 million to intensify its programme support in several areas. The first area is good governance for sustainable human development, encompassing both the political and economic aspects of governance. I am pleased to inform the Council that the International Organization of la Francophonie has expressed an interest in collaborating with this programme, and that a formulation mission is travelling to the Central African Republic this month to prepare the programme, following which UNDP and la Francophonie will be seeking additional funding for this purpose.

Closely linked with the governance programme is the Central African Republic's poverty and sustainable livelihoods programme, an ongoing programme implemented in close collaboration with all the United Nations agencies in the Central African Republic. Adopting a participatory approach, it emphasizes the contributions of non-governmental organizations and grass-roots communities and focuses on income-generating activities and ensuring access to basic social services and productive assets.

Continued close collaboration will be maintained with the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the development of these activities, and we look forward to sharing with the Council information on the future progress of our programme activities in the Central African Republic.

The President: The next speaker is the Vice-President for External Affairs and United Nations Affairs of the World Bank, Mr. Mats Karlsson, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Karlsson: I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this welcome opportunity

to address the Council. We appreciate the lucidity and balance of the report of the Secretary-General and the briefing by his Representative.

The World Bank is very concerned about the situation in the Central African Republic, not just because of the particular difficulties it has faced in the past five years but also because it has been so affected by events elsewhere in Central Africa, including, most obviously, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In the past 10 years, Governments across Africa have moved steadily — some of them boldly — to introduce reforms which will strengthen growth and ensure basic services for the poor. Unfortunately, the Central African Republic has not kept pace with that progress.

Internal conflict has been one of the reasons. So has conflict outside its borders.

In its operational policy on development cooperation and conflict, issued this month, the Bank has committed itself to supporting economic and social recovery and sustainable development in countries in transition from conflict through investment and development policy advice, with particular attention to the needs of war-affected groups that are especially vulnerable for reasons of gender, age or disability.

In trying to meet this mandate, the Bank has a number of advantages in the Central African Republic, including a Country Office in Bangui and a long history of involvement in national development programmes. However, there have been interruptions in the Bank's programme in recent years, and a need to update our knowledge of policy areas that are important for economic growth and poverty reduction, including livestock, cotton, forestry and rural transport.

But the path to strengthening the Bank's programme there appears to be opening up. We have confidence in the Prime Minister and his economic team, not because they are always in agreement with us, but rather because they have a clear sense of their country's interests and are effective in defending those interests internally and externally.

Despite day-to-day difficulties that would daunt any of us, the Prime Minister and his colleagues have been able to keep their focus on medium- and long-term issues, which would only become more acute if left alone. For example, during consultations in Washington last month, the Prime Minister was as concerned about facing the HIV/AIDS crisis head-on and improving energy efficiency as he was about solving the problem of salary arrears in public service.

Recognizing this focus and commitment, and the special complications that external events — especially the interruption of petroleum supplies — have caused to economic management, the Bretton Woods institutions have supported the Government's stabilization and reform efforts in a number of ways. Last month, on 27 December, the Bank's Board partially waived a condition for the release of the second tranche of budget support. This action was very exceptional. The country was in arrears in its servicing of its International Development Association debt, and we would not normally ask our Board to approve a tranche release, much less a waiver, in such circumstances.

On 10 January, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the second annual arrangement under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility.

On 18 January — last Thursday — the Bank's Board joined the IMF Board in endorsing the Government's Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper as a sound basis for preparing a more complete poverty strategy.

In the next six months the Bank will work closely with the authorities to develop a more comprehensive poverty strategy; help the Government to prepare the case for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative; support the preparation of an urgent project to fight HIV/AIDS, for which a Bank preparation mission is currently in the field; consider supplementary support for the energy sector; and apply a grant from the Bank's Post-Conflict Fund to fund activities at the community level.

Looking beyond the next six months, three points deserve particular attention. First, a sound economy built on strong and well-managed public finances and the rule of law are essential for underpinning peace-building efforts. Secondly, the alignment of the efforts of the entire United Nations community, with ourselves and our IMF colleagues focusing on the economic and social dimensions, has never been more vital than now, and we remain fully engaged. Thirdly, the international institutions can provide some temporary relief for pressing problems such as civil service salary arrears, but only determined and unswerving efforts on the part of the Government can address the root causes of the

crisis, especially weak governance, and provide a lasting solution.

Mr. Gayan (Mauritius): I wish to express my appreciation for your kind words of welcome addressed to me at the beginning of this meeting, Mr. President. I note also that you are conducting the Council's deliberations in a masterly manner.

My delegation would wish to thank the Secretary-General for the report dated 11 January on the situation in the Central African Republic. My delegation also wishes to convey its appreciation to Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mats Karlsson, Vice-President for External Affairs and United Nations Affairs of the World Bank, and Mr. Frederick Lyons, Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme, for their comprehensive briefings this morning. My delegation also wishes to welcome The Honourable Agba Otikpo Mezode, Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic, to the Council.

The situation in the Central African Republic remains a matter of serious concern for the Security Council and the region in particular. The political tension between the ruling party and the opposition is unabated. The national reconciliation process seems never to get under way. The absence of dialogue between the Government and the opposition has exacerbated the socio-economic crisis faced by the Central African Republic.

The conflictual relations between the ruling party and the opposition and the boycott of the meetings of Parliament by the opposition constitute a serious setback to the democratic process, which is itself relatively new. Immense efforts have to be undertaken by the political leaders and major stakeholders to consolidate the democratic institutions that have been established. It is therefore imperative that the political leadership start, without delay, a process of dialogue with a view to bringing peace and stability to the country. But it is equally important that the opposition respond favourably to any such initiative.

The democratic process, which must be an inclusive process, depends upon the existence of institutions that alone are capable of ensuring that the fundamentals of a modern State are observed.

The political instability in the Central African Republic has been a major cause of the economic hardship suffered by the people for the past four years. The non-payment of salaries to the military and civil servants has resulted in social unrest and impoverishment of the population. As long as State employees are not paid their salaries, there can be no reliable public administration. Institutions essential for the smooth running of Government will be undermined. The rule of law will disappear and the resulting environment will lead to corruption and other illegal practices. Such an environment will destroy good governance and will give rise to abuses and injustices, as well as social and political crises.

This situation cannot therefore be allowed to prevail. Despite the great economic potential afforded by highly unexploited natural resources, the Central African Republic continues to face a fragile social, political and economic situation. Although there have been several attempts by the international community to help the Central African Republic out of its crisis, the outcome is, to say the least, disappointing.

The Bretton Woods institutions are of the view that the challenges of maintaining macroeconomic stability remain phenomenal in the Central African Republic. I think this requires no further comment.

My delegation considers that it is important that the request of the Government of the Central African Republic for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative be approved as early as possible, in order to enable it to address its economic challenges.

It is also important that the situation in the Central African Republic be viewed in the broader context of what is taking place elsewhere in the African continent. It is a matter of grave concern that at the start of the twenty-first century, several countries in Africa are still plagued by conflicts as a result of — and here we, as Africans, have to be honest with ourselves — the absence of good governance, non-respect for democratic institutions, persistent violation of human rights and the lack of transparency on all fronts.

I had the honour of participating in the France-Afrique summit, which was held last week in Yaoundé, in the Republic of Cameroon. The theme of the summit was globalization challenges and opportunities for Africa. While the summit was preparing to address

these fundamental issues, which are highly critical for the future of the African continent, the news of the assassination of the late President Laurent Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo filtered in. Such acts unfortunately underscore the magnitude of the problems which we face in Africa, and particularly in the Great Lakes region.

But not all news out of Africa is bad. We need to welcome the peaceful and democratic transition of power in Senegal, Benin and Ghana. The mindset is changing, and the leaders in Africa are working towards the restoration of peace, stability and security by engaging all parties in conflict situations with a view to promoting regional economic integration.

Instability and insecurity are the greatest impediments to development and progress in Africa. At this time, when the challenges facing Africa are so daunting and when the negative impact of globalization has yet to be assessed, it is opportune for Africa to look at the larger picture and concentrate on a path of development which avoids conflicts, tension and war and which enhances people-centred development strategies.

We welcome the efforts of the Security Council in the Central African Republic, and we wish also to inform the Council that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) leaders are working hard to defuse potentially explosive situations throughout the continent.

In the aftermath of the recent tragic events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the current Chairman of the OAU, President Eyadema of Togo, has taken the initiative of convening an urgent meeting of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. This initiative is welcome, and, together with whatever the Council undertakes, the OAU proposes to accompany the Council's efforts and attempt to seek African solutions to African problems.

We have to acknowledge that the conflicts in Africa have become a source of instability not only within the countries but also for other countries in the region. These conflicts have had damaging consequences, and they have already adversely affected the future of generations of Africans that are yet unborn.

Indeed, the predicament of the Central African Republic cannot be dissociated from the dire conditions prevailing in the Great Lakes region. The illegal circulation of, and trafficking in, small arms and light weapons; the use of mineral and other resources for financing paramilitary and organized rebel groups; and above all, the wrong utilization of human resources are some of the issues that need to be tackled urgently. We at the level of the OAU are engaged in getting African countries on a course dictated by harsh realities and pragmatism rather than ideology.

In conclusion, my delegation would wish an early return of political normalcy in the Central African Republic as well as a rapid economic recovery. My delegation also wishes to underscore the importance of viable regional cooperation to avert future conflicts.

The President: I thank the representative of Mauritius for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, for his statement, which clearly sets out the current situation in the Central African Republic. I should like also to thank for their statements Mr. Frederick Lyons, Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Mr. Mats Karlsson, Vice-President for External Affairs and United Nations Affairs of the World Bank. If I may, I should like also to pay tribute in particular to Mr. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mauritius, for his presence and for his particularly wise statement.

Undeniable progress has been achieved in the past four years and continues to be achieved, thanks to the presence of the United Nations in the Central African Republic. Recent achievements include disarmament and the restructuring of security forces.

The Central African Republic, situated as it is in one of the most unstable and fragile regions of Africa, is undoubtedly one of the success stories of the United Nations in the past few years. Nevertheless, the situation in the Central African Republic remains unstable and fragile. The breakdown in the political dialogue, the recurrent strikes and the economic difficulties that have been mentioned are all causes of concern.

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo can explain these difficulties to some extent, but it does not explain the entire situation. France, along with the other members of the Council, would like to know, as soon as possible, the results of the mission carried out by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Amara Essy, who last December went to assess the consequences of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the situation in the Central African Republic.

These tensions threaten the process of civil peace and national reconciliation that was initiated four years ago and which led to the signing, in January 1997, of the Bangui Agreements. It is, unfortunately, the Central African people who would be the primary victims of any return to the dark years of 1996 and 1997. But the international community itself would stand to lose a great deal were the process of reconciliation in the Central African Republic to be blocked.

Four years of intense efforts are at stake: those of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Banguie Agreements, until April 1998; those of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic; and, finally, those of the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in the Central African Republic, since February 2000. These efforts enabled the Central African Republic to appear — and I paraphrase the words of the Secretary-General in a previous report — as an island of relative stability in a war-torn region.

To emerge from this difficult situation in the Central African Republic, two complementary types of efforts are required. The first area continuing international assistance, which is indispensable. We can thus only be gratified at the decision of the World Bank to disburse to second tranche of $5 million of the fiscal consolidation credit. The International Monetary Fund's recent decision on the reduction of indebtedness is also a step in the right direction.

I am gratified at this opportunity to share our views with eminent representatives of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. I believe this is a good example, which we should follow on other occasions. The Security Council must increasingly serve as the forum to craft integrated strategies for peace-building.

There should be no pause either in bilateral assistance. The commitments undertaken here in New York in May 2000 must be honoured in full. France, for its part, has fully honoured the pledges it made in 2000 and will continue to honour all of its commitments. France is the principal bilateral donor, accounting for more than 18 per cent of total official development assistance. In terms of civilian operations, this represents $18 million in 2000. More than 82 volunteers are present in the field.

Among its main projects in military cooperation, France has helped to equip two companies of the Central African army, one in Bouar, the other in Bria. Work has begun to deploy a third motorized police unit in Bambari. The principal objective of these decentralization efforts is to achieve security and the revival of economic activity in the provinces of the Central African Republic.

International assistance, however, is not all that is required. The second focus of efforts must be civil peace. Peace-building has now replaced peacekeeping. Central Africans are once again fully in charge of their own fate. France entirely agrees with the assessment made by the Secretary-General in his report that

> "It is up to the Central Africans themselves to summon the political will and work towards national reconciliation". (*S/2001/35, para. 36*)

Among all the political actors who must participate in that national reconciliation, the Central African authorities have a particular responsibility. It is incumbent on them above all to make decisions conducive to allaying existing tensions. Two measures are of the highest priority. First, the dialogue with the opposition must be revived and, secondly, all arrears of wages must be paid as soon as the budget permits. From this perspective, the Government's announcement that, as of February, it intends to repay all arrears from the year 2000 is good news. Similarly, the release in early January of 62 detainees held since the banned rally of 19 December was another positive signal. We hope that, in light of recent tensions, structural reform will resume, beginning with reform of public finances in order to stabilize the financing of the civil administration.

It is in this spirit of peace-building that the Security Council's dialogue with the Central African authorities must continue. The presence here today of a high-level representative of the Central African authorities, Minister Agba Otikpo Mezode, is

particularly welcome and I welcome him very warmly here today.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): We thank the Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), Cheikh Tidiane Sy; World Bank Vice-President Mats Karlsson; and the Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme, Frederick Lyons, for their briefings. Bangladesh warmly welcomes the presence among us of The Honourable Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Mauritius, and we thank him for his very important statement. We should like to offer particular words of appreciation to Mr. Sy and his team on the ground for their tireless efforts towards securing peace and supporting institution-building in the Central African Republic.

The last time the Council considered the situation in the Republic was in July. At that time, my delegation committed its total support for the important role BONUCA had been playing.

Later in the meeting, we shall have the pleasure to listen to the Central African Republic Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility. We look forward to hearing his perspective on the situation in his country.

Since the institution of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic, we have seen some progress in achieving peace and stability in the country. However, we still find a number of concerns prevailing on the ground.

First, as to the absence of national reconciliation, it is important that the Government and the opposition get into dialogue to consolidate peace and national reconciliation. We would encourage the Government to initiate dialogue. In that respect, we would urge the Representative of the Secretary-General to use his good offices to focus on this aspect.

Secondly, as to human rights, while we are happy to see a diminishing of summary executions, we are equally concerned at the "neighbourhood justice" that is alarmingly taking over in the Central African Republic. The Secretary-General in his report has portrayed a worrisome human rights situation in various dimensions. This is another area where we would once again ask for the urgent attention of the Secretary-General's Representative, in consultation with the Government of the Central African Republic.

Thirdly, we are particularly concerned at the long-unpaid arrears of civil servants and the resulting discontent. In the country's current economic situation, this is likely to have a spiralling effect on the social situation. The Secretary-General has underlined that the resentment might intensify. In that regard, we appreciate the Government's recent announcement to pay part of the arrears of the civil servants. We strongly encourage the Government to continue its efforts in that direction.

Fourthly and finally, let us turn to the role of the international community. Following last May's meeting, we expected bilateral and multilateral donors and the multilateral financial institutions to support the Central African Government in a much more robust manner. Although the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have recently released some financial resources, the bulk of the commitments remains unfulfilled. This morning, we heard the Secretary-General's Representative underline how reconstruction and reconciliation efforts could be at risk because of resource constraints. We remain concerned, learning from the Secretary-General's report that much of the recent release of the World Bank's credit will be consumed by further debt-servicing. We believe that the Central African Republic should be considered for debt relief as soon as possible.

Bangladesh would support the Secretary-General's call to the donors in that vein to assist the Central African Government to meet the multifarious challenges on a stronger footing. This will have an important impact on the country's overall economic stability. Bangladesh fully agrees with World Bank Vice-President Karlsson in his emphasis on the need to align the efforts of the entire United Nations community, focusing on social and economic areas.

Following this meeting, the Council will adopt a presidential statement. My delegation fully supports the elements in that statement.

Mr. Harrison (United Kingdom): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on the Central African Republic. We should also like to thank Mr. Sy, the Secretary-General's Representative, for his introduction to this debate. We should also like to thank the representatives of the

United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank for their interventions. My delegation is also pleased that Minister Mezode of the Central African Republic is present here today.

It was good that our debate was begun by the Foreign Minister of Mauritius. He set out a thoughtful and perceptive African perspective on the Central African Republic's problems. My delegation agrees with this perspective. Minister Gayan noted, for example, that the problems of the Central African Republic include an absence of good governance, a lack of respect for democratic institutions, violations of human rights and the absence of transparency.

My delegation is very concerned by the dismal situation in the Central African Republic, which is getting worse. It is very important, as others have said, that the efforts of the international community and of the United Nations over recent years not be wasted.

In that context, we believe that the only way to resolve the present national crisis is for there to be full consultation and cooperation between the Government of President Patassé and the opposition. We are concerned about the allegations that militias are being used to intimidate the opposition. It is essential that all sides use only democratic means to resolve their disputes.

We understand that the Government has now found money to pay at least some of the backlog of public-service salaries, and we welcome this, but it is just a temporary solution. It is essential that the Government of the Central African Republic carry out reforms that will lead to a lasting solution to the country's economic and civil problems.

My delegation would like to welcome the work of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) on security reform and also the progress being made by the Government on restructuring the defence services.

We share the concerns that have been expressed by others over the impact on the Central African Republic of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are interested in the recommendations that the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Essy, has made to mitigate the effects of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Central African Republic. We would be interested to learn what progress is being made in implementing those recommendations.

Finally, we hope that Governments will make speedy progress in releasing funds for security and development programmes in the Central African Republic.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): Today's meeting on the situation in the Central African Republic affords the Security Council another opportunity to focus on the challenges of post-conflict peace-building and how the international community can become constructively involved in the process of sustaining peace in the aftermath of a conflict. The Jamaican delegation welcomes this positive trend of open meetings which seek to focus on the specific needs of post-conflict societies. These meetings should serve as pointers in refining an effective strategy to be adopted by the United Nations in peacekeeping operations.

We are pleased to welcome Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mats Karlsson, Vice-President of the World Bank, and Mr. Frederick Lyons, Acting Deputy Director of the African Bureau of the United Nations Development Programme. We also look forward to hearing from the Minister for Reconciliation of the Central African Republic.

We are very pleased to have in our midst the Foreign Minister of Mauritius. We thank him for his remarks, which addressed the situation in the Central African Republic in a wider African context.

My delegation supports the elements of the presidential statement which is to be issued at the conclusion of this debate. I will therefore confine my remarks to a few pertinent issues.

The commitment to peace does not end with the cessation of hostilities in a conflict. Rather, the true measure of long-term peace involves the building of democratic, social and economic institutions and practices in order to consolidate and maintain peace. It involves national efforts for reconciliation, tolerance and the peaceful management of differences. Coupled with this, there must be a strong political will to effect change on the part of political leaders, as well as the requisite financial backing to put into effect sustainable programmes which will ensure that the gains of peace are not eroded.

The report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic, as well as the presentations made earlier in this debate, clearly attest to the critical need for paying concerted and focused attention to the deep-seated root causes of conflict in the Central African Republic. While my delegation recognizes the undoubted progress that has been made in recent years, we remain deeply concerned about the political tensions between the ruling party and the opposition, which no doubt have had a negative impact on the political landscape in the country. The reports have demonstrated just how tenuous the political situation is, and that this poses an obstacle to the fledgling democratic institutions. We therefore join in calling for a return to dialogue, as the continuing tensions can only serve to compromise the progress made towards the consolidation of peace in the country.

For its part, the Security Council cannot sit idly by as the situation deteriorates. As we have noted on previous occasions, the successful outcome of the post-conflict transition in the Central African Republic will stand as a test of the international community's resolve to enable formerly war-torn countries to establish the institutions necessary to prevent a return of conflict. A partnership between the Security Council, the Secretariat, United Nations funds, programmes and agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions is therefore of critical importance.

We appreciate the tremendous strides made by the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) in fulfilling its mandate, despite the limited resources. We commend in particular the Office's efforts to strengthen national capacities through training in human rights and humanitarian law. It is clear from the Secretary-General's report, however, that much remains to be done in institutionalizing the administration of justice. It is also worrying to learn that, owing to the lack of the necessary resources, there has been little progress in critical programmes such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. We urge the international partners to honour the commitments that have been made so that BONUCA's efforts can be more effective.

Jamaica welcomes the steps already undertaken by the World Bank in funding post-conflict peace-building projects in the Central African Republic. This includes the decision to approve a partial waiver of the conditions attached to the release of the $5 million second tranche of the fiscal consolidation credit. External debt, however, remains a serious challenge for the Central African Republic, and the initiatives undertaken by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to help the Government to address this and other related issues are steps in the right direction.

It will be recalled that in May of last year several Governments, in collaboration with the World Bank, convened a donors meeting to sensitize the international community and lead it to make tangible contributions to fund post-conflict peace-building efforts in the Central African Republic. It is regrettable, however, that so far the objective of that meeting has not been achieved. We urge the international community to fulfil the pledges made, in order to bring the transition to peace closer to a reality.

The impact of conflicts in the region on the situation in the Central African Republic is also one of great concern, as it is evident that the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has added to the general instability in the region. Indeed, the Secretary-General in his report has noted the negative economic and social impact of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and noted that this is compromising the progress that has been made towards the consolidation of the fragile peace and security in the Central African Republic. This has been exacerbated by the flow of refugees across the porous borders between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. As the Secretary-General's report clearly illustrates, the conditions of refugees on the southern border of the Central African Republic are indeed dire.

It is clear that only a comprehensive approach to the conflicts in the region will effectively stem the spill-over effects of those conflicts. We also concur with the Secretary-General that a solution to the crisis in the subregion depends on the restoration of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We welcome the appointment of Mr. Amara Essy as Special Envoy to assess the situation, and we look forward to a full report on his recommendations. We also commend the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian agencies that have sought to bring relief to the refugees and internally displaced persons.

Finally, my delegation continues to believe that the path to peace in the Central African Republic,

though a challenging one, can be reached. Let us view the deliberations of today's meeting as a demonstration of our resolve to ensure that the gains achieved so far will not be fruitless. Let us not become complacent or lax in our efforts to bring hope to the people of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Konfourou (Mali) (*spoke in French*): First of all, my delegation is pleased with the holding of this public meeting on peace-building efforts in the Central African Republic. I appreciate the helpful statement made by Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA). I also appreciate the statements made by Mr. Frederick Lyons, Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Mr. Agba Otikpo Mezode, Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic; and Mr. Mats Karlsson, Vice-President of the World Bank. We also appreciate the presence among us at this meeting of the Council, and the relevant statement made by Mr. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of the Republic of Mauritius.

The information that has been provided indicates that progress is being made in the Central African Republic towards national reconciliation and strengthening peace and national unity. My delegation welcomes the new progress reported by the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic and by the Representative of the Secretary-General, in particular in the areas of disarmament, restructuring security and defence forces and respect for human rights by law enforcement officers.

My delegation regrets the slow pace of the demobilization and reintegration programme. While we thank donor countries for the efforts that have been made, we also invite them to provide further assistance in this area. Mali attaches particular importance to the consolidation of efforts in this regard.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the recent statement by the Government of the Central African Republic regarding settling some of the salary arrears due civil servants and the release of political prisoners. We trust this will mark the beginning of a de-escalation of the political and social situation in the country. In this regard, Mali calls for an open and frank dialogue among all the players in the Central African Republic.

We believe that settling the problem of refugees and displaced persons in the Central African Republic and other countries of the region would help promote regional stability. My delegation remains deeply concerned about the continuing social and political tensions in the country, which are not conducive to the process of peace and national reconciliation.

The human rights situation is also a cause for concern to my delegation. In that regard, we support the Secretary-General's idea for continuing to stress to the authorities of the Central African Republic the need to respect the rights of all its citizens, including those who have been accused.

We are also concerned about the very fragile economic situation in the Central African Republic, which has been aggravated by a disruption in fuel supplies. In this regard, Mali welcomes the Secretary-General's efforts, through the Bretton Woods institutions, to extend assistance to the Government of the Central African Republic so that it can resolve the financial problems confronting it. In that regard, we welcome the encouraging response on the part of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

However, my delegation continues to believe that no international support can replace the political will of the people of the Central African Republic to resolve their own problems and achieve national reconciliation. We urge all political actors in the country to carry out a constructive dialogue in the interests of all the people of the country.

Finally, we endorse the draft presidential statement before the Council.

Mr. Franco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, and the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank for their presentations regarding the situation in the Central African Republic. I would like in particular to welcome the presence among us today of the Minister of Culture of the Central African Republic. I also welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Mauritius, who was with us earlier today.

The report of the Secretary-General describes a state of affairs that is of concern to my delegation. We believe that today's open debate is a good opportunity to analyse the role of the United Nations in post-conflict situations.

The efforts of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) continue to move ahead. We are happy to learn that there has been progress in the areas of disarmament, restructuring the defence and security forces, and in respecting and promoting human rights. However, we note with concern that the current social and political tensions are threatening the steps that have been taken towards national reconciliation and the creation and strengthening of democratic institutions. The absence of dialogue among the country's political forces and the difficult economic situation imperil the efforts being made by both the Government and the international community.

We are also concerned about the repercussions of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Central African Republic. We hope soon to hear the opinions and recommendations of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Amara Essy, as to how the negative effects of the Congolese conflict on the Central African Republic can be reduced, especially its humanitarian, economic, social and security consequences. As the Secretary-General points out in his report, the proliferation and illegal circulation of arms originating in neighbouring zones of conflict could contribute to a deterioration of the situation in the country.

It is clear that the responsibility for building peace and bringing about national reconciliation lies first and foremost with the people of the Central African Republic themselves. We believe, however, that the international community's contribution to this process is of fundamental importance, as the Central African Republic is a country with high rates of poverty, unemployment and malnutrition and few basic services. We therefore believe that there must be a high level of commitment and responsibility on the part of external actors.

Without ignoring the positive contributions of donor countries and multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, we are concerned about the inadequate financial resources and the prolonged delay on the part of the donor countries in honouring their commitments. This has made it difficult to implement the demobilization and reintegration programme, as the Secretary-General also mentioned in his report.

We should like to encourage the Government of President Patassé and all the political actors in the country to continue to work tirelessly towards reconciliation and dialogue. We also appeal to the international community and the Bretton Woods institutions to cooperate closely with the Government of the Central African Republic in continuing to support the strengthening of its democratic institutions and its political and economic stability.

My delegation supports the text of the presidential statement to be adopted as the outcome of this open debate.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report, and to thank Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, Representative of the Secretary-General, for further updating us on the situation. We are also grateful to the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme and of the World Bank for their briefings.

The Chinese delegation appreciates the enormous amount of work done by Mr. Sy and the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) in promoting and protecting human rights and strengthening the capacity of the law enforcement agencies there.

The political, economic and social situation in the Central African Republic is currently of great concern. We have noted the absence of dialogue between the Government and the opposition and the refusal of the opposition to cooperate with the Government, which is leading to tension in their relationship. Hostilities have increased, particularly in recent weeks, creating a serious impediment to national reconciliation, and we should like to express our concern in this regard. We hope that all the parties in the Central African Republic will summon up the political will to adopt specific measures. In particular, the Government and the opposition should undertake the necessary dialogue and alleviate the tension, thereby creating favourable conditions for bringing about national reconciliation. At the same time, we believe that the United Nations should further facilitate dialogue and reconciliation between the Government and the opposition.

It should be recognized that any deterioration in the social and economic situation in the Central African Republic would, in turn, have a negative impact on political reconciliation in that country and increase social unrest. China welcomes the intention of the Bretton Woods institutions to provide financial support to the Central African Republic. We hope that the Bretton Woods institutions and other donors will increase their financial support to the Central African Republic. We hope that all those donors who pledged at the most recent special meeting, held in New York in May, will implement their commitments, and we call upon them to do so in order to help the Central African Republic deal with its present difficulties.

We also hope that debt relief measures will be implemented even sooner. During the most recent forum on Central Africa, we announced that we would write off certain debts owed to China by the Central African Republic, and we hope that that action will contribute to increasing and improving the economic situation there. The international community should certainly consider long-term measures to improve the social and economic situation.

We have also noted that the Government of the Central African Republic has taken specific actions to re-establish its national defence and security forces. We express our concern about the fact that BONUCA convoys have been held up and attacked, and we hope that the Central African Republic will adopt effective measures to punish those responsible for those criminal activities and to guarantee the safety and security of BONUCA personnel and property.

We support the mission of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to assess on the ground the negative impact of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Central African Republic. We hope that the parties concerned will unite their efforts to create favourable external conditions for the early realization of national reconciliation and to improve social and economic conditions in the Central African Republic.

In conclusion, we support the presidential statement to be issued later.

Mr. Sergeev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sy, and to the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank for the statements that they made in the Security Council.

We have always supported efforts to build peace, achieve national reconciliation and strengthen democratic institutions in the Central African Republic. We greatly appreciate the work done by the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic, which is assisting the authorities in their efforts to strengthen the peace process and to involve the international community in helping the process of recovery in the country.

Like other members of the Council, we are disturbed by what the Secretary-General said in his report about tension in relations between the central Government and the opposition in the Central African Republic. As can be seen from the report, the opposition is still feeding on hopes that it can seize power again, even after being defeated at the ballot box, and it is relying on a confrontational approach. Given the background of social tension and the difficult economic situation, the absence of a constructive dialogue between the interested parties could have dangerous consequences for the future of post-conflict recovery of the country. Additional concern arises from the fact that the fragile peace and stability in the Central African Republic are being negatively affected by the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We support the appeal by the Secretary-General to the Government of the Central African Republic to take steps to reduce the tension between the Government and the opposition. Like other members of the Council, we believe that the people of the Central African Republic themselves bear the main responsibility for strengthening the peace process, and they must themselves demonstrate political will in the interests of national reconciliation. The international community, including the organs of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, must do all they can to help.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): I would like to thank the Representative of the Secretary-General, Cheikh Tidiane Sy, for briefing us today on developments in the Central African Republic. I am also grateful to Mr. Lyons of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and to Mr. Karlsson of the World Bank. Those organizations are closely involved in the Central African Republic, and their insight and experience are

a most useful guide to the Council. We are also grateful to the Group of Friends of the Central African Republic for their work. In addition, we welcome Mr. Mezode, Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic, and we thank him for joining us today.

We welcome the progress that the Government of the Central African Republic has made, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, particularly towards disarmament and the restructuring of the defence and the security forces.

At the same time, however, the Secretary-General's report presents an unsatisfactory picture of the economic and political situation in the Central African Republic. The consolidation of democratic institutions and the promotion of national reconciliation are prerequisites to political, economic and social development. The absence of any dialogue with the opposition parties is very regrettable. However, we note that the Secretary-General recognized that the opposition parties have themselves often adopted a confrontational approach. We concur with the Secretary-General's assessment that it is up to the Central African people themselves to summon the political will necessary and work towards national reconciliation.

I would like at this point to acknowledge the straight talking this morning by the Foreign Minister of Mauritius, when, in a wider comment, he rooted conflicts in some African countries in the absence of good governance, non-respect for democratic institutions, persistent violations of human rights and lack of transparency.

The action taken by the Central African Government in December to disperse an opposition rally, which was followed by the arrest and trial of parliamentarians, has only served to heighten tension. We would urge all sides, Government and opposition, to enter into a serious dialogue in order to preserve the democratic institutions so recently established. We call on the Government of the Central African Republic to follow through on a number of confidence-building measures, such as access to the State-run media, as was promised by Prime Minister Anicet Georges Doleguele, in order to help improve the relationship between the sides.

On the human rights front, the report highlights a number of serious violations, although the decrease in the level of summary and extrajudicial executions is to be welcomed. In particular, we deplore the violations that have been taking place in the guise of "neighbourhood justice", referred to earlier by Representative Sy. We look forward to hearing definitive confirmation of an end to these quite unacceptable practices. The Government must take the necessary and appropriate action in this regard. We welcome the work that the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic has done in training law enforcement officers. This is a significant contribution towards increasing confidence in State justice and law and order. We note Representative Sy's comment that international donor support is also needed in this area.

The serious economic situation in the country is not helped by the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we share the Secretary-General's assessment that without the restoration of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there can be no lasting solution to the instability in the region.

We welcome the positive responses that the Secretary General has received from the President of the World Bank and from the International Monetary Fund in response to his letters of November last year. The approval of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative debt relief package should enable the resumption of payment of salaries and a gradual settlement of arrears in wages and help to defuse what has been described as the serious and explosive social situation in the country. Likewise, structural reforms and poverty reduction programmes of the Government will also benefit from the HIPC package. Vice-President Karlsson's positive report this morning regarding Prime Minister Doleguele's commitment and that of his Government to defend effectively their national economic interests both internally and externally is heartening.

The international community has already invested heavily in peace in the Central African Republic and must be encouraged to continue to do so. However, the necessary return on this investment can come only through the restoration of political stability, which in turn must come from the people and institutions of the Central African Republic. We strongly support the Secretary-General's call for the international financial institutions to contribute constructively to a

collaborative effort with the Government of the Central African Republic in helping to restore social and political stability to the country.

Finally, may I express Ireland's support for the proposed presidential statement.

Mr. Strommen (Norway): Allow me, like others, to thank the Representative of the Secretary-General, the representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the representative of the World Bank. Furthermore, my thanks go to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mauritius for his very interesting intervention. We look forward to hearing the Minister of the Central African Republic later this morning.

The Central African Republic is an example of the need for a comprehensive approach to post-conflict peace-building. The situation requires the coordination and mobilization of resources by the international community and a clear commitment by the national authorities dialogue and reconciliation in order to create a climate conducive to development. There is a need for a number of different measures in order to help institution-building, strengthen respect for human rights and achieve disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. There is also a need for humanitarian efforts, in order to assist the growing number of refugees in the areas bordering the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Norway supports the efforts of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) to strengthen national capacity to enforce and protect human rights and the rule of law, for disarmament and for restructuring the defence and security forces. We welcome the progress that has been made in these areas.

Despite these efforts and achievements, the current situation in the Central African Republic, as reflected in the Secretary-General's report, gives reason for concern. The negative economic developments and the social unrest increase the possibility of instability and conflict and threaten reconstruction efforts. These negative developments must be reversed. It is therefore important that the Security Council give a clear signal to the Government of the Central African Republic and other political actors on the need to summon the necessary political will and work towards national reconciliation, as pointed out by the Secretary-General.

We are encouraged by the achievements made towards disarmament described in the report. However, the influx of new weapons threatens to cancel out the positive results obtained. The recent influx of illegal weapons is closely connected to the conflicts in the countries neighbouring the Central African Republic. This clearly indicates the need for a regional approach. Without a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic is likely to face a continued influx of refugees and problems with illegal trafficking of arms.

In connection with the special donors meeting held in New York in May last year, my Government has contributed $300,000 to the special programme on arms collection, demobilization and reintegration. We are concerned by the information given in paragraph 25 of the Secretary-General's report that it has been necessary to suspend this programme due to the lack of financial resources and the delay in acting on the pledges that were made, and I would like to urge all donors to follow up on their commitments.

Finally, Norway supports the presidential statement.

Mr. Kuchyinski (Ukraine): We would also like to join previous speakers in commending the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sy, for his briefing, which provides a comprehensive analysis of the situation in the Central African Republic and identifies the progress and challenges of the peace-building process in the country. We strongly support the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), and we would like to express our appreciation to Mr. Sy for his continued efforts, as the Head of BONUCA, in support of the country's stabilization process.

We warmly welcome the Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic, Mr. Mezode, and we look forward to the statement he will be making later this morning. We are also pleased to note the comprehensive statement made by the Minister for Foreign Relations and Regional Cooperation of Mauritius.

We underscore the importance of the fact that representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank are participating in today's debate, as the role of these

institutions in the process of economic recovery and development of the Central African Republic cannot be overestimated.

We welcome the presence of the Permanent Observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie to the United Nations, Mr. Bouabid, who is taking part in the Council's meeting this morning. We would like to commend the organization on its valuable contribution to the post-conflict peace-building process in the Central African Republic.

Our discussions today on the challenges of post-conflict peace-building in the Central African Republic are a logical extension of the recent deliberations of the Council on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. After the successful completion of the transition from a United Nations peacekeeping operation to a post-conflict peace-building presence in the Central African Republic, the country focused on a wide range of post-conflict challenges related to the consolidation of peace and stability. We are pleased to note that the Government of the Central African Republic has made significant progress in the disarmament and restructuring of the defence and security forces.

We also welcome the number of positive developments that have taken place in the human rights situation in the Central African Republic. In this context, we welcome the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) aimed at promoting awareness of human rights issues in the country. Much remains to be done in this respect, and the assistance of the international community is of particular importance.

In the light of the discussions that the Council held last week, we would like to note with satisfaction the recent decision of the President of the Central African Republic on the creation of an HIV/AIDS treatment centre. We were also pleased to hear from the representative of the World Bank, Mr. Karlsson, that the problem of HIV/AIDS has been given high priority in the Bank's strategy in the country.

The regional context of the situation in the Central African Republic continues to be a source of serious concern. The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which resulted in a large number of refugees and an oil crisis in the Central African Republic, has severe implications for the humanitarian, economic, social and security situation in the country.

The economic sector in the Central African Republic remains very fragile and is in need of long-term solutions. In this respect, we welcome the decision by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on the provision of financial assistance to support economic recovery in the country.

Indeed, the realization of political, social and economic strategies in the Central African Republic requires a consistent and coordinated approach by the international community. At the same time, the primary role in strengthening the spirit of national reconciliation, and the main responsibility for peace and stability in the country, rests with the Government and the people of the Central African Republic. It is therefore important that the parties engage in a constructive political dialogue towards national reconciliation.

We believe that the presidential statement that we are about to adopt will send a strong signal of support and encouragement to the Government and people of the Central African Republic to consolidate the progress made towards the restoration of stability and the promotion of sustainable peace and development.

Mr. Minton (United States of America): The United States delegation would like to join our colleagues here today in thanking our guests for the very useful briefings they provided and also in welcoming the Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic and the Foreign Minister of Mauritius and thanking him for his comments, which led off this discussion.

I would like to briefly touch on some of the themes that have already been mentioned around the table here today with which we agree. In our view, the overarching issue in this discussion is, of course, good governance. Good governance is the necessary foundation for the creation of a peaceful, democratic and self-sufficient society. In the end, the Government of the Central African Republic must take the leading role, albeit with the support of the international community, in resolving the country's political and economic hardships.

We are encouraged at the positive actions taken by President Patassé in the area of disarmament and the

restructuring of defence and security forces. These efforts should continue.

There is justified concern, however, at the absence of political dialogue in the Central African Republic. We urge President Patassé to take the necessary steps to resume talks between his Government and members of the opposition parties. We urge the opposition as well to be willing to work towards a peaceful solution to the existing stand-off. Both sides must refrain from inflammatory accusations and actions and approach negotiations in a spirit of consensus-building and national reconciliation.

The United States especially appreciates the efforts of Prime Minister Doleguele and others in the Government to implement economic reforms. We strongly urge them to stay on the path of economic reform proposed by the Bretton Woods institutions. Controlling expenditures, safeguarding the use of taxes and other revenues to alleviate poverty, eliminating corruption, and strictly adhering to the sound economic planning set forth are actions which are vital to the development of a strong and stable Central African Republic.

I should like to second the delegation of Ukraine in taking note of Mr. Karlsson's comments about the efforts of the Government in dealing with the threat posed by HIV/AIDS to the social structure of the country. The efforts of the Government, supported enthusiastically by the World Bank, should be commended. This is a necessary commitment to addressing this problem in an area that has been ravaged by HIV/AIDS. This is a very serious commitment, and we take note of it.

Although the people of the Central African Republic themselves bear primary responsibility for their own political and economic reform, we must recognize that no country exists in a vacuum. The Central African Republic is directly affected by events occurring in neighbouring States, particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The United States is particularly concerned about the large number of refugees on the southern border of the Central African Republic and their potentially destabilizing impact on the economic and political situation in the country. In this regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to send Mr. Amara Essy, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, to the region to assess the impact of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Central African Republic.

Both the international community at large and the countries of the region must provide assistance to the Central African Republic in its efforts to become a self-reliant and democratic State. We especially call upon regional actors to take all necessary steps to reopen the Congo and Ubangi rivers in order to ease the disruption of river traffic and alleviate the fuel crisis that threatens the fragile economy of the country. The reopening of these rivers is of critical humanitarian and economic importance for all residents of the river basin.

The Central African Republic, in a larger sense, represents an important test case for the United Nations and the international community to assist a struggling government in institution-building and reform measures following the resolution of conflict and a successful United Nations peacekeeping mission. We congratulate Representative Sy and his staff for recognizing this fact and for their hard work to make this endeavour a success. In our view, the outcome of these efforts will have an impact and an influence transcending the Central African Republic and set an example for similar partnerships between Governments, this Organization and the international community in future.

Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to welcome to New York Minister Agba Otikpo Mezode and to thank our guests from the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the International Organization of la Francophonie for their presence and for their exhaustive statements.

The Tunisian delegation has read with interest the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and the work of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA). I should like in particular to thank Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, the Representative of the Secretary-General in the Central African Republic, for his briefing. We have noted the progress that has been made, but we remain deeply concerned by the situation that has prevailed there for some time, as described by Mr. Sy.

It is clear that the consequences of the 1996 crisis are still being felt everywhere and that, despite enormous efforts, the challenges facing the Central

African Government are far from having been met because of its many difficulties at the political, socio-economic and security levels.

My delegation would encourage all parties to begin a constructive dialogue in order to ensure the survival of the young democratic institutions of the country, with the ultimate goal of achieving genuine and lasting national reconciliation. In that respect, the work of the Secretary-General's Representative, Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, and BONUCA will be invaluable and will certainly facilitate negotiations among all the political forces of the country.

The economic situation in the Central African Republic is also disturbing and could easily lead to political instability. It is obvious that the Central African Government is incapable of leading the country out of this situation without the assistance of the international community and the Bretton Woods institutions. We therefore welcome the decision of the World Bank to approve the release of the second tranche of the fiscal consolidation credit. We also welcome the decision of the International Monetary Fund to approve the Central African Government's request for debt relief. This initiative will allow the Government to resume the regular payment of wages and gradually to pay off its arrears, which cannot fail to soothe the growing social anger in the country.

My delegation believes that, despite tensions and a few incidents, the security and military situation in the Central African Republic is encouraging. My delegation welcomes the efforts of the Government in this connection and wishes in particular to commend the initiatives that have allowed the defence and security forces to be restructured, units to be deployed in the countryside and ex-combatants to be reintegrated into the army.

We also welcome the significant results achieved in the disarmament process, which have allowed the Government to recover 95 per cent of heavy weapons and 65 per cent of light weapons. This positive picture is somewhat overshadowed, however, by the inability of the Central African Government, due to a lack of resources, to pursue the programme to demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatants. Moreover, the emergence in the country of new weapons from neighbouring States in conflict demonstrates that the threat of destabilization is ever present and that the Central African Government must remain vigilant and intensify its efforts to end the illicit distribution of these new weapons.

My delegation believes nevertheless that the search for a definitive solution to all these security, humanitarian and socio-economic problems in the Central African Republic would benefit in some ways from the adoption of a comprehensive subregional approach. In this respect, we feel that the assessment to be carried out by Mr. Amara Essy, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to the subregion, will be very helpful to the Council.

Finally, we wish to pay tribute to the strenuous efforts of BONUCA. We deplore the recent incident involving one of its staff members. Much remains to be done, inter alia, in combating such abuses as the so-called "neighbourhood justice". We are convinced that the many steps being taken by BONUCA are extremely helpful to the Government and people of the Central African Republic and will assist in particular in fostering a culture of peace, dialogue and tolerance throughout the country.

The Government of the Central African Republic has demonstrated its firm resolve to create conditions conducive to lasting peace and development. Thus, aware of all the political, security, economic and social priorities it faces, we join the Secretary-General's appeal to the international community, which has always supported peace-building efforts in the Central African Republic and elsewhere, to reiterate its commitment to that country and to stand with it at this sensitive phase of peace-building.

We support the presidential statement to be adopted later today.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Mezode (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I shall have to beg the Council's indulgence, being so moved by the wealth of analyses and reflections I have heard in this Chamber.

As the Security Council, under your leadership, Sir, is meeting on the situation in my country, following the issuance of the Secretary-General's latest report and following up on the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), I wish to convey the

greetings of Mr. Ange-Félix Patassé, Head of State, Government and the people of the Central African Republic. He sincerely hopes, Mr. President, that your country, Singapore, and its valiant people — occupying a particularly choice place in the concert of nations at the dawn of the twenty-first century — will continue to contribute effectively to the consolidation of peace throughout the world. He has also charged me with conveying the enormous gratitude of the Central African Republic to the international community, international organizations, the Organization of African Unity, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and to our friends and partners for their invaluable and tireless contributions to restoring and securing the peace and to establishing conditions for genuine and lasting stability and economic revival in my country.

I have not come solely to discuss our profound gratitude. I have come above all solemnly to reaffirm that our authorities, in the interests and on behalf of the Central African people, remain faithful to the indispensable option of preserving national peace and unity and of consolidating our democratic achievements, despite the logic of confrontation tirelessly pursued by some extremist political leaders. Given the tremendous risks posed by the strategies of rupture and destabilization to the process of consolidating the achievements of our fledgling democracy, it is absolutely indispensable and urgent that we submit to the Security Council, in total objectivity and without seeking to evoke superficial emotion, our correct interpretation of the prevailing situation.

In his toast on 1 December 2000, the national holiday of the Central African Republic, President Ange-Félix Patassé declared that there was no political crisis in the Central African Republic; there was a social crisis. This is not to minimize the social crisis, but to call attention to the level of confusion.

I do not know whether this is traditional in this forum, but if I may, I would like to commend the objectivity and the comprehensive nature of elements of the report of the Representative in Bangui. His conclusions capture completely the expectations of the people of the Central African Republic and of their Government. How can we remain unmoved when hearing the eminent personalities who have addressed this forum and expressed their genuine and sincere concern for the problems of the people of the Central African Republic?

I will also pay tribute to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the island of Mauritius, and I share his relevant analysis of the situation in Africa as a whole and in particular in my country.

I would like to renew my sincere compliments to the Ambassador of France and to recall the significant role played by his country in the restoration of peace and the establishment of democracy in the Central African Republic. By giving wise advice to all parties, BONUCA and France continue to work tirelessly to consolidate what has been achieved, and the same can be said for most of the major countries that are represented in the Central African Republic.

It is true that, since the middle of the year 2000, in the capital of the Central African Republic there have been demonstrations inspired by the extremist political parties, which have lost their popularity and are desperately grasping at methods to revive themselves, as well as seeking short cuts to a transfer of power. In their reckless search to take and exercise the power that they were not able to obtain through the free elections — which were supervised, barely a year ago, by the international community — these extremist political parties are leaving no stone unturned, inventing or provoking incidents when they do not exist, and seizing on whatever incidents do occur and making political issues out of them. This is the case with the essentially legitimate protest movement being organized by the trade unions that represent civil servants and Government officials. In my country we call this political theatre. But we would turn to the neutral observers of the Central African situation and ask them what our country, the Central African Republic, really needs in the present situation: civic education or political theatre?

There should no. be a political crisis in the Central African Republic. Why is this? Simply because 95 per cent of the republican institutions provided for by the 14 January 1995 Constitution have already been established and they are functioning normally and well.

Let us look at a few examples, in particular the National Assembly. It is composed of six parliamentary groups, five of which are of the opposition. In every debate, the Chairmen of the parliamentary groups, depending on the importance of the project or issue, have 15 to 20 minutes. If we total the statements, the

opposition has 75 minutes of air time every day, since all the debates are broadcast in their entirety via the national radio — and some are broadcast on television as well. Added to this are the individual statements, each of which is 10 minutes long. And given the allure of microphones and the camera, everyone wants to speak, and the opposition representatives do not forgo the opportunity, even if it is only to repeat themselves, to incite violence or to slander others. None of these representatives has been harassed in any way, despite the fact that they say anything and everything.

The judicial branch also functions independently. The most recent verdicts provide vigorous proof of this. However, the Government should have intervened, because a crime had been observed: the refusal to comply with a ban on meetings, which had been issued because of the risks posed. But the Government allowed the justices to say what was just. And their ruling, of which the Council has been informed, supports the policy of trying to calm the situation — and this without the intervention of the Government. Civil society also plays a role, and sometimes with disturbing partisanship.

As for the Government, it never stops reiterating that it is open to dialogue, to openness. The head of the Government, Mr. Anicet Doleguele, repeats this constantly. The President of the Republic, whenever there is a national event — be it happy or sad — invites all the political and opinion leaders, including his predecessors. Some attend, but the extremists continue to hide behind their refusal to enter into dialogue.

The crisis experienced by the Central African Republic during the last six months is a social crisis rooted in events of 1991-92, when the fight for multi-party politics took place. This period was characterized by several series of strikes, by paralysis. It was quickly followed by the presidential campaign, in which there was excessive tribalization even in the administration and the defence forces. Those who witnessed the events of 1996 and 1997 — that is, the mutinies — were able to see the extent of the violence provoked on all sides by this excessive tribalization of social life.

After those two years of mutiny during which almost everything was destroyed and there was no fundamental authority, the Central African Republic found itself 12 months in arrears on civil servants' salaries. Despite the goodwill and intentions that were expressed here and there, no emergency plan was devised to address the tremendous needs. The wait-and-see policy adopted in response to the mutinies was pursued until 1999, because we had two major events: the legislative elections in 1998 and the presidential elections in 1999. These two elections were considered to be risky, and thus donors and other economic actors did not take steps to intervene. Nonetheless, the Government paid staff salaries at the end of every month until May 2000, but it had no further means for tackling the thorny problem of paying the 12 months' arrears that followed the mutinies.

I would like to recall as well that when it came to power, the new regime inherited 13 months' arrears. However, as has been said here, with *débrouillardise* — or some call it corruption — prevailing in the country, many Central Africans succeeded in getting their salaries arrears from 1993 paid.

Today accounting for the civil servants who have not been reimbursed for their arrears from 1993, we arrive at a total of 9 billion CFA francs, which is the equivalent of five months' back salaries inherited from the previous Government. These five months plus the 12 months that were passed on as a result of the mutinies add up to 17 months, which will soon be 16, since in the next 10 days we will be paying salaries that will finish off the three months just referred to here.

In sum, when I left Bangui on Saturday, the Government had already paid — on Friday, 19 January, and Saturday, 20 January — three months' back salaries to civil servants. Today, 1999 has been entirely paid off.

I would like to clarify what has been written and said about civil servants not having been paid for an entire year. That is inaccurate. Up until the crisis of May 2000, we had been making monthly payments on salary backlogs under a system that may have seemed a bit unorthodox. In other words, instead of making payments from the budget for the current year, 2001, the budget in place made it possible to make payments for the 1999 and 2000 arrears. This means that payments due in the current year are deferred to the following year, thereby making it possible to pay salaries regularly or even monthly. It was only with the emergence of the fuel crisis in May — a perverse effect of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — that civil servants had to live for two or three months without being paid. But we cleared up the 1999 arrears last September.

Everything has been said. The comments were objective and the suggestions relevant. I do not wish to go on too long, but I would like to make some concluding comments to the Council. We believe that the systematic destruction of the social and economic infrastructure that began in 1991-1992 and worsened with the mutiny of 1997 has become even more serious with the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its perverse effects. The increased precariousness of the infrastructure that resulted from the May 2000 fuel crisis — among whose perverse effects have been complications in our dealings with financial institutions on the second year of the programme — added to our foreign debt. Finally, the logic of political recovery implemented by extremist parties constitutes today the true framework of the worsening of the crisis in the Central African Republic.

The Government has never deprived civil servants of the rights they claim. But it is essential to understand that the state of the country and the national effort that must be made to achieve concrete and realistic solutions are constantly being jeopardized by the irresponsible activities of certain corrupt politicians who since independence have fostered tendencies towards anarchy. Those trends can be found both in the majority and in the opposition and present a major obstacle to the campaign to fight corruption and to extend good governance, the latter being one of the Government's current projects to revive the economy.

Democrats everywhere must understand that if taking and managing power is not carried out in keeping with electoral rules, any number of temptations can arise — including thinking that the course of events can be altered in the streets. That is the logic that some parties are using in their strategies to win power. It is also a logic that calls for them to occupy the streets constantly by infiltrating and taking over student, union and any other demonstrations that may take place. It also sometimes includes relying on examples taken out of their social or political contexts from such places as Yugoslavia, Côte d'Ivoire and even Poland, where Lech Walesa was able to take power; he was a trade unionist too. Under this logic, trade unionists in our country believe they should take power.

We in the Central African Republic firmly believe that the urgency of the situation does not call for closing ourselves off nor for seeking methods that are supposedly perceived as authentic. What is urgent for the people and Government of the Central African Republic is to consolidate democratic achievements. The essential national expectation with regard to the issues at hand is for stabilization of a State that is reborn from the ashes of the mutinies that severely challenged national unity. What is important for us is for there to be a resumption of economic activity that generates our own resources to meet the immense needs and desires of our population, in addition to the assistance we hope for from the international community.

We in the Central African Republic are convinced that the success and consolidation of our fledgling democracy does not imply the succession of new teams in accordance with an illegitimate timetable. Instead, it means that the team in place should complete its mandate and organize free, fair and democratic elections that bring about genuine political transition. Any process that deviates from this classic pattern would distort the democratic ideal, which is a justified aspiration of people. This seems basic, but it must be clearly understood if we are to avoid any upheaval or divisions along ethnic, tribal, regional or even religious lines.

We are convinced of the need for effective rule of law. Despite what has been written and said, human rights have never been of as much concern to our leaders as they are now. The many seminars organized by non-governmental organizations, BONUCA, and the Government itself bear witness to that fact. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which oversees human rights, is carrying out very intensive activities in my country. The official, who is a woman, visits the few remaining prisons in Bangui, as well as police detention centres. She speaks quite freely, not as a civil servant, of the fate of detained persons. There is not a single political prisoner among the approximately 1,100 prisoners we have.

With regard to freedom of expression, I said a few moments ago that parliamentary debates are broadcast in their entirety in both French and Sango. This means that representatives may speak freely to criticize or say whatever they wish. The media publishes whatever they want to. I have brought a few copies of opposition newspapers with me. Some of these newspapers say, for instance, that it was the trade unions that broke off the dialogue with the Government. Another publication even said that the opposition parties are saying "nyet" to President

Patassé. All this corroborates what some have said here.

The burden is shared here, and the other side also bears responsibility for refusal to engage in dialogue. When one sees our newspapers, he will realize that quite a few countries would envy the freedom we have to say whatever we want and to criticize, even vilify, the President, ministers and members of Parliament. Freedom of expression exists and thrives in our country. There has been neither censorship nor closings of media outlets, either national or international ones. There have been no police visits of any sort to the headquarters of political or professional groups.

To conclude, there are no militias of the Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MPLC) or of the governing party in Bangui. This is somewhat like the Loch Ness monster: much is said about it, but no one has actually ever seen it, just as no one has ever been able to find these militias or to count their numbers. This is all part of the strategy to spread disinformation and slander the Government.

Reference has been made here to a lack of dialogue between the opposition and the Government — between the opposition leaders and the President of the Republic. But, as I have already said, the appointed institutions have always expressed their willingness to act. It is true, as has been said here, and from reading from what has been written, that the President was annoyed to meet with the opposition leaders in June and July. But, as I said, on sad, non-political occasions, they sometimes visit. Mr. Goumba, one of the radicals, went to the home of the late Mrs. Patassé to pay tribute to her remains. This was a gesture of understanding, because in our tradition, when there is a death, we cease quarrelling and meet together, which calms the situation to some extent. Again, contrary to what has been said, freedom does exist, as I said earlier. It is not ideal, but we are all doing our best.

Democracy and the rule of law also dictate that everyone accept what we call the principle of the primacy of law. This may sound a little pretentious, but anyone having an elected or administrative responsibility must obey the law. One cannot flout the law just because one is a representative — still less if one is a president or a minister. Ministers are always being monitored, so they are not able to do that. Thus, no one is above the law.

I assure the Council that, in order to face up to all of these difficulties — all the situations with which the Security Council is rightly concerned — the Government intends to shoulder the full burden of its responsibility and to respect its commitments, as we repeat the simple but powerful words of Boganda, the father of our nation. He said, "Let us not say a great deal, but let us work very hard", and "We cannot feed a people with politics".

We ask the Council to be understanding. The Council will see that, if we are given the means to help us make a start, and a little time, the Central African Republic will become a haven of peace — the Switzerland of Africa — as it was known to be some 30 years ago.

I should like to thank the United Nations, the Security Council, the international and non-governmental organizations and the friends and partners of the Central African Republic. The statements that we have heard today will comfort us and encourage us to do better. We are willing to do so. I hope that Radio Ndeke Luka, which is the civic education vehicle for BONUCA, will be able to obtain cassette recordings of today's statements so that all of us in the Central African Republic can listen, time and again, to the wisdom that has been expressed here today.

I should like to thank you, Mr. President, and the Council for your generosity and attention.

The President: I thank the Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic for his kind words addressed to me and to my country.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the Permanent Observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie to the United Nations, Mr. Ridha Bouabid, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 if its provisional rules of procedure.

I invite Mr. Bouabid to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Bouabid (*spoke in French*): The International Organization of la Francophonie is concerned about the current situation in the Central African Republic, which is a State member of our organization. Reconstruction and peace-building efforts

in that country, in support of which, in May 2000, the United Nations organized a special meeting on the Central African Republic and its foreign partners for security and development, are currently being jeopardized by serious tensions resulting from disturbing economic and social circumstances and the fragile political situation.

The economic and social crisis in the country is characterized mainly by fuel-supply problems resulting from the situation prevailing in the region, in particular the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and by the recurrent problem of salary arrears, with the strikes and social unrest that that unleashes. Because the political situation is also tense — mainly because there is no dialogue between the authorities and the opposition — the social crisis in the Central African Republic could endanger reconciliation efforts in the country.

The International Organization of la Francophonie has always demonstrated its solidarity with the Central African Republic. In the wake of the mutinies in 1996 and 1997, African States members of la Francophonie undertook mediation efforts leading to the signing of the Bangui Agreements and sent an inter-African force to the area — the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB). The Mission was made up of troops from six francophone African countries, and it later became the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), with the participation of the same countries.

On many occasions, the Security Council expressed its appreciation to MISAB and MINURCA and congratulated them on the work they did and on their invaluable contribution to calming the situation in the country. However, during this, the most delicate phase through which the country has passed since MINURCA left, the results of the international community's efforts to date — which remain fragile — will be wasted if they are not properly consolidated. That is why the International Organization of la Francophonie would like sincerely to thank you, Sir, for focusing the attention of the international community on this problem during your presidency and for inscribing the item on the agenda of the Council.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his report and welcome the Minister for Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic. We also welcome Ambassador Sy, the Representative of the Secretary-General, and thank him for the efforts that he has continued to make as head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) and for his cooperation with the International Organization of la Francophonie.

I should also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for sending a Special Envoy, Mr. Amara Essy, former President of the General Assembly and former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, to the region to assess the impact of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Central African Republic and the Republic of the Congo. We hope, with a view to a settlement of the conflict, that Minister Essy's recommendations will help to make us more aware of the need for urgent action by the international community to offset the impact of the conflict on neighbouring countries, particularly the Central African Republic, a landlocked country whose economic potential cannot be developed without at least a semblance of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and security along the length of the Ubangi River, which is essential for imports to and exports from the Central African Republic.

We encourage the international community to do whatever it can to help the Central African Republic, as well as the Republic of the Congo, to deal with the problem caused by the large number of refugees fleeing conflict zones in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also call for urgent and effective action to ensure security in shipping lanes, particularly in the Ubangi River, in order to prevent the current crisis from worsening further and the central African economy being for a long time to come.

The Bretton Woods institutions also have a major role to play. The recent steps taken by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are in the right direction. We welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to approach those institutions to make them aware of the particularly fragile situation in the Central African Republic. We encourage him to continue what he is doing and to draw the attention of the World Bank and the IMF to the need to take into account the situation of countries emerging from a conflict and to make conditions for granting financial assistance to these countries flexible.

The International Organization of la Francophonie has supported the return to stability and the revival of the democratization process in the Central African Republic, inter alia, by providing assistance and sending observers to the 1998 legislative elections and the 1999 presidential elections and by sending a goodwill mission in March 1999 and a needs assessment mission in May 2000. It intends to follow up and strengthen the implementation of concrete measures to enable the Central African Republic to benefit fully from programmes that La Francophonie carries out through its intergovernmental agency and its other operators.

These measures, which seek to support Government efforts and programmes linked to governance, the strengthening of democratic institutions, combating poverty, economic and social reintegration of youth or even new information and communication technologies, were announced at the special meeting in May 2000 at New York. They must be implemented, in cooperation with the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) in Bangui and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), within the framework of the agreements reached by la Francophonie with the United Nations and UNDP.

For example, la Francophonie participated in the holding of a national seminar for Central African parliamentarians, from 9 to 11 October 2000, on the role of Parliament with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights, which was organized by BONUCA, in partnership with the National Assembly, the Ministry for Relations with the Parliament and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In recent weeks, the Secretary-General of our organization, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, asked Mr. Alioune Sene, the former Ambassador of Senegal to Geneva, to carry out a mission in the Central African Republic to study ways of strengthening francophone cooperation in that country and to identify possible assistance to complement efforts under way to facilitate a dialogue between the Central African political forces. Ambassador Sene's mission to the Central African Republic took place from 15 to 22 January 2001 and was received by President Patassé. Its mandate also included an updated assessment of concrete steps of cooperation in close liaison with the other partners involved, that could strengthen the capacities of all actors and players in democratic life and the peace process in the Central African Republic. On the basis of its numerous contacts, the mission identified a number of steps that could be quickly implemented.

This would relate particularly to contributing, in cooperation with BONUCA and UNDP, to a comprehensive assessment initiative on the implementation of the Bangui Agreements and the National Reconciliation Pact in order to renew dialogue among all the actors, public and private. It would also concern making available Francophone expertise for drafting texts that advocate a calmer political life, as provided for in the Agreements and, finally, significant support for the functioning and revitalization of control of monitoring, regulation and mediation institutions, which are of major importance at this stage.

In conclusion, I wish to stress the importance of the role of the Central Africans themselves to ensure their country's return to lasting peace, security and stability. The responsibility for that is primarily incumbent on the Government, the political leaders and the Central African people, not the international community. Their resolve, commitment and actions to achieve the objectives, through dialogue, can only further encourage the international community to help them.

The Central African Republic has played an active role in preparing and developing the international symposium on the exercise of democracy, rights and freedom within the francophone sphere, held at Bamako from 1 to 3 November 2000. The authorities of that country are parties to the principles set forth there and commitments entered into under the Bamako Declaration, which particularly sets down the principle that democracy requires dialogue at all levels, among citizens, social partners and political parties, as well as between the State and civil society.

What the Central African Republic needs most today is a calmer political life. Among the commitments undertaken in the Bamako Declaration for a calmer political life is that of having all political parties — from the opposition as well as from the majority — participate in the national, regional and local political life, in order to settle conflicts of interest peacefully, as well as to prevent — and, if the need arises, to settle peacefully — disputes and tensions between political and social groups by exploring all appropriate mechanisms and means.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm to the Central African authorities and people the International Organization of la Francophonie's commitment to lend all its support to national and international efforts for a calmer political life in the Central African Republic.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Singapore.

Like many of my colleagues here, I too have a prepared set of remarks, but in the interest of time and with a view to responding to or building upon the comments that have been made here, I will try to speak extemporaneously.

First, I would like to thank very much, like all my colleagues, the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sy, as well as the representatives of the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for their contributions. I would also like to warmly welcome the Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic, Mr. Agba Otikpo Mezode. We truly appreciate his presence here after the very long journey he has made to get here. While we have benefited from listening to all of you, we hope that all of you have also benefited from listening to the comments that have been made today.

As the Ambassador of France said in one of the early statements, there clearly is a need for an integrated approach in peace-building, and, as he said, the Security Council can play a valuable role in promoting an integrated approach towards peace-building, and we hope that this debate has contributed in that sense. Of course, we hope that the Ambassador of France will elaborate on his comments when we next discuss the question of the Central African Republic.

It is clear that the United Nations has been actively engaged in the Central African Republic for quite a while. In fact, a lot of praise has gone to the work of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA). As members know, MINURCA completed its work, and there is now a fear, as indeed the previous speaker mentioned, that the good work done by MINURCA may be lost as a result of recent developments.

If there is one theme that I think we heard consistently this morning in the discussions, it was that it is clear that there is a need to promote national reconciliation in the Central African Republic, and I think if there were two words that we heard over and over and over this morning, they were the words "national reconciliation".

It is also true that several hurdles need to be cleared before we can achieve a durable peace and lay a firm basis for the long-term development of the Central African Republic. Let me mention four hurdles.

The first hurdle is the need for full and prompt implementation of the outstanding elements of the Bangui Agreement and the National Reconciliation Pact.

These areas in particular remain central to the post-conflict peace-building efforts. These include, first, the strengthening of the police force and the restructuring of the armed forces to achieve greater ethnic and geographical balance; secondly, demobilization and reintegration of ex-soldiers; and thirdly, measures to strengthen the economy. These are not new elements. These have been mentioned by previous speakers.

The second hurdle, which was also mentioned by several speakers, including our colleagues from the World Bank and UNDP, was the need to raise sufficient funds in support of peace-building efforts.

The third hurdle that I think we also need to address relates to the root causes of the problems being faced now. The latest report of the Secretary-General clearly paints a bleak picture of a political stalemate, a deepening social crisis and a precarious economic situation, but it is not clear whether the report analyses sufficiently what the root causes are of the problems currently faced by the Central African Republic.

In this regard, I would like also to mention that one particular point that seemed to surface consistently in remarks today was the need to address the problem of arrears in salaries, and the consistency with which it was referred to suggests that this may be a fundamental problem that needs to be addressed in finding solutions to the problems in the Central African Republic. Here — if we may make one simple suggestion — we hope that at the next session of the General Assembly's Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and

Sustainable Development in Africa, the Group will look at the experience of the Central African Republic in this area.

The fourth and final hurdle, of course — and this again was referred to by several delegations — is the continuing unrest in neighbouring countries, particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This point, I think, was made most eloquently by the Foreign Minister of Mauritius, when he said:

> "Indeed, the predicament of the Central African Republic cannot be dissociated from the dire conditions prevailing in the Great Lakes region."

In this regard, I hope that when Mr. Sy returns to Bangui, he will carry a message, from our delegation at least, to Mr. Amara Essy, telling him that we fully support the work he is doing to bring about peace and stability in the Central African Republic and in the region.

Finally, in conclusion, it is clear that in overcoming the hurdles I have mentioned, we need to establish a clear finishing line. The objectives we need to work for need to be understood by all of us, and we hope that the presidential statement we will adopt at the next meeting will be helpful in that direction.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to Mr. Sy to respond to comments and questions raised in this morning's discussions.

Mr. Sy (*spoke in French*): I do not think that I have a great deal to say following the very detailed and relevant statements made by the various members of the Council and their guests. I would merely like to underscore — as you yourself did very aptly, Mr. President — that this is a critical peace-building phase in a subregional context characterized by a high level of tension.

Even if solutions were to be found to the domestic problems of the Central African Republic, this might not be enough to guarantee peace and stability in that country. A comprehensive approach must therefore be considered. In this connection, Minister Amara Essy's mission and the very relevant conclusions he has reached could help us to consolidate the necessary components of a subregional solution.

As concerns the internal problems of the Central African Republic, I think that today we can say that headway is being made. There has been progress in terms of the promotion and respect of human rights, and the partners are beginning to understand the scope of the crisis and realizing that they have to be more flexible in their interventions. I am thinking in particular of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, but also of the Central African Republic's bilateral partners. I think that there are grounds for hope.

I will leave this meeting with a degree of optimism based in part on the very insightful statements made by the members. I was very struck also by the attentiveness with which they read the Secretary-General's report, by the relevance of their comments and by the richness of their contributions.

I thank the Council for its support, and I hope that we in the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) will continue to enjoy the confidence of the Secretary-General and the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Sy for the clarifications he has provided.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council will continue its consideration of this item at a meeting to be held immediately following the adjournment of this meeting. I would therefore like to urge members of the Council to remain seated as we move immediately to adopt the presidential statement.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.